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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6319
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 000180

FOR CA/OCS/ACS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CPAS](#) [CASC](#) [CMGT](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: EASING OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLANK-PASSPORT-PAGE REQUIREMENT FOR U.S. CITIZENS

REF: 07 JOHANNESBURG 79

11. Summary: South African Home Affairs authorities have agreed that arriving U.S. citizens who have no blank pages marked "Visas" in their passports, as is normally required for entry into South Africa, may be processed for admission on available pages marked "Endorsements" or "Amendments and Endorsements." Turnarounds of Amcits at South African ports of entry have dropped off dramatically as a result of this change, a welcome development for Amcit travelers as well as for consular sections and duty officers at the four South Africa posts. End Summary.

12. As reported reftel, consular staffs in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, as well as duty officers at those posts and the Embassy in Pretoria, have wrestled for years with the effects of a South African regulation requiring visa-exempt visitors from the United States and other countries to have at least one blank "visa" page in their passports in order to be admissible into South Africa. Prior to September 2008, in Johannesburg alone, as many as 15-20 turnarounds/detentions came to our attention as a result of this regulation, and there were no doubt many other cases about which we were never notified.

13. On September 12, 2008, following approval from the Department, the Embassy advised the SAG via a diplomatic note that for purposes of entry into South Africa the USG considered pages marked "Endorsements" or "Amendments and Endorsements" in U.S. passports to be equivalent to pages marked "Visas." The following week, a contact at the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) advised us informally that all South African ports of entry (POEs) were being instructed to process arriving Amcits as necessary on the endorsement pages in their passports if the visa pages were all used up. In a diplomatic note dated October 1, the Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed that "the request by the Embassy to use pages marked 'endorsement' and 'amendments and endorsements' has been acceded to" by DHA, and that the DHA "will also advise all officials at ports of entry accordingly."

14. Posts in South Africa have been monitoring compliance with the new policy over the past six weeks, and in that time not a single passport-pages turnaround has come to the attention of our ACS units, with the exception of one case from early November involving an Amcit who had neither blank visa pages nor endorsement pages (a rare occurrence). As we head into the busy summer season and look forward to the 2010 soccer World Cup that will be hosted by South Africa, far fewer American tourists and business travelers will be inconvenienced by South Africa's insistence on one -- or sometimes two -- blank passport pages, with obvious benefits as well for our consular sections and duty officers at all four posts in South Africa.

15. The Mission does not intend to amend information available to the public and travel industry regarding the need to have two blank visa pages to comply with the relevant South African regulation. We have agreed with DHA that the liberalized interpretation of the regulation should be seen as an extraordinary measure for those situations only where travelers have no blank visa pages left in their passports. To avoid

confusion on the part of the traveling public, airlines and travel agents, and to limit how often this extraordinary measure has to be applied, we do not want to advertise its availability too loudly or openly, or we would run the risk of giving our audience the false impression that routine South African requirements for travelers have been modified when in fact they have not been.

16. Post wishes to express its appreciation to our colleagues in the Department, in particular CA/OCS/ACS, CA/OCS/PRI and CA/PPT, for agreeing to the limited use of passport "endorsement" pages for purposes of South African entry processing.

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